

Nyroca ferruginea. The White-eyed Duck.

1343. 16.3.1914. Sohawa. ♂ ad. Wing 180 mm.

Fairly common, considering the scarcity of suitable waters for it.

[Iris whitish; feet mixed black and plumbeous, webs black; bill plumbeous black.—*C. B. T.*]

Nyroca fuligula. The Tufted Duck.

Common winter visitor, staying well into March.

Mergus albellus. The Smew.

974. 12.1.1914. Jhelum. ♀. Wing 178 mm.

This bird was secured from a flock noticed diving in the shallows of the river above Jhelum.

Podiceps albipennis. The Indian Little Grebe.

A resident, but not numerous owing to the scarcity of suitable waters.

IV.—*Note on a remarkable Honey-eater* (*Woodfordia superciliosa* North) *from Rennell Island in the Western Pacific.*
By C. M. WOODFORD, C.M.G., late Resident Commissioner, British Solomon Islands Protectorate.

(Plate III.)

SITUATED to the south-east of the Solomon Group in the western Pacific are the two islands marked on the British Admiralty Charts as Rennell and Bellona.

Rennell is situated about ninety miles to the south of San Cristoval, and Bellona is about fifteen miles to the north-west of Rennell.

Both islands are inhabited by natives of Polynesian race, totally distinct from the Melanesian natives of the Solomon Group, and there is no communication between them.

The native name of Rennell is "Mangana," and that of Bellona "Mangiki."

I am informed that the natives of Rennell call the south-west portion of their island "Bethona," and the central

portion "Mangihamoā." The Melanesian natives of San Cristoval, from the mountains of which Rennell is frequently visible, know it by the name of "Totohuke."

Rennell is about 40 to 45 miles in length and not more than about six miles in width. It is about 400 feet high, and almost of uniform height from end to end. It is densely wooded and composed entirely of upheaved coral.

Between Rennell and San Cristoval the German surveying vessel "Planat" in 1910 found a depth of 3762 fathoms*, so it is certain that there has been no land connection with the islands of the Solomon Group within recent times, and it is possible that further surprises, both ornithological and botanical, may be expected when the island is better known.

As there are no anchorages and the currents are strong and uncertain, the two islands have been very little visited.

In 1903 an opportunity occurred which enabled me to visit Rennell in a small cutter which was placed at my disposal by a trader in the Solomons, who accompanied me.

We communicated by boat with the natives at both the western and eastern ends of Rennell, and after considerable trouble and favoured by fine weather, a precarious anchorage was found in an open bay in about the centre of the south coast.

At this particular spot no natives were at first met with, but we found near the beach a dilapidated hut and some graves.

Although I had a gun with me I was reluctant to use it for shooting birds, as the natives we had met, although perfectly friendly, were very shy and at the same time curious and inclined to be thievish.

During a walk through the bush, extending altogether for about three or four miles in two directions, in addition to birds common in the Solomon Group, I noticed the Black-necked Ibis (*Ibis mollucca* Cuvier) settling on high trees in the bush. It appeared to be quite common, and I could certainly have shot two or three; but did not do so for the reason mentioned above.

* See Geographical Magazine, March 1911, p. 321.

The occurrence of this bird at Rennell is very interesting, as after an experience extending to nearly thirty years I have never seen it in the Solomons, nor has it been recorded by others.

Returning to the beach we found three old women, who appeared to be tending the graves, and after they had overcome their first surprise at seeing us emerge from the bush in their rear, they entered into conversation.

At this landing place I found a strange orchid which I sent to Kew, and it was described as a new species under the name of *Saccolabium Woodfordii* Rolfe.

As we were on the point of leaving the island I had no objection to use my gun, and I shot two Honey-eaters, which proved to be of a common species, as well as the bird which forms the subject of the present note.

I sent the bird, in spirit, to the Australian Museum, Sydney, and it was described by Mr. A. J. North in the 'Victorian Naturalist,' xxiii. 1906, p. 104, and a photograph of the skin forms Plate 8 of that volume.

Mr. North's description is as follows :--

“Family MELIPHAGIDÆ.

WOODFORDIA, gen. nov.

Bill equal in length to the rest of the head, nearly straight, broader at the base, deeper than broad at the centre of the apical portion, the culmen distinctly ridged and slightly curved towards the tip. A broad patch in front of the eye and a ring round it bare of feathers, the skin wrinkled, over which is sparingly distributed on that portion in front of the eye, very fine, short white hairs. First primary entirely suppressed, the tip of the wing formed by the third, fourth, and fifth primaries. Tail imperfect, some of the central feathers missing; apparently nearly square, and two-thirds of the length of the wing. Tarsus comparatively thick, covered with a few scales in front, and nearly one-third longer than the bill; feet fleshy and robust.



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WOODFORDIA SUPERCILIOSA.

WOODFORDIA SUPERCILIOSA, sp. nov.

General colour above brown, washed with dull olive-green, which is brighter on the lower back, rump, and upper tail-coverts; upper wing-coverts like the back, the quills dusky-brown, externally margined with dull olive-green; tail-feathers dusky-brown, indistinctly margined with dull olive-green; base of the forehead whitish; a broad patch in front and a ring round the eye bare of feathers, above the latter a well-defined white eyebrow; ear-coverts and throat ashy-white; sides of the neck and remainder of the under surface and under tail-coverts dull ashy-white, washed with pale olive-brown; bill yellowish-brown, the under mandible, except at the tip, of a clearer yellow; wrinkled skin in front of, and round the eye blackish; legs and feet light greenish-olive, soles of feet yellow. Total length in the flesh 6 inches; wing 3·0; tail 2·0; bill 0·75; tarsus 0·9.

Habitat. Rennell Island, Solomon Group.

Type in the Australian Museum, Sydney.

The above description is taken from a spirit-specimen.

Owing to its large bill, short tail, thick tarsus, and stout and fleshy feet, I was doubtful even of the family to which this bird belonged until I had examined its tongue, which is deeply grooved down the centre, bifid and brush-like at the tip. One, however, of its chief characteristics is the bare ring round, and the wrinkled skin in front of, the eye, showing an affinity to the genera *Melidectes* and *Meliphotes*, but both of these have the skin on the sides of the face smooth and the bare space larger behind than in front of the eye. In the total absence of the first primary, *Woodfordia* resembles the genus *Zosterops*."

At my request the Curator of the Australian Museum, Sydney, had a drawing prepared for me which has not, up to the present time, been published. I sent this drawing to the late Dr. P. L. Sclater in August 1909, and in returning it to me he wrote: "It is a very curious bird, and I have never seen anything like it." With the help of the photograph and the coloured sketch, Mr. Grönvold has prepared